[Living on the Richards' Farm]

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LIFE HISTORY

TITLE: LIVING ON THE RICHARDS' FARM

Date of First Writing February 7, 1939

Name of Person Interviewed Carrie B.R. Dunlap (white)

Fictitious Name Caroline B. Richards

Street Address Four miles south of Winnsboro, S.C., on Winnsboro and Columbia Highway

Place Rockton, S.C.

Occupation Farmer

Name of Writer Lucile Clarke Ford

Name of Reviser State Office

“Last night I was reading my mother's old Bible. When I re-read the family record as Mother wrote it, I was reminded of the visits Aunt Lula made to us and how she and

Mother would talk about old times," Caroline Richards began, as she stood before the mirror neatly arranging her soft gray hair.

Taking a seat beside me, in front of a cheerful, crackling fire, she continued: "Mother had three sisters and four brothers. Aunt Lula died C10 - 1/31/41 - S.C.

young with consumption. There wasn't any cure for it then. Just as with my brother James, we called him Jim for short, he was crippled from the time he was ten. He fell off old Charlie, the horse, which he rode twice a week to town to get the mail. My! but he looked pitiful after that, standing at a window watching us play townball and baseball. We needed him in the game. It took all the girls and boys to make up a game. He did worry Ma about something to read. I can hear her now, the way she would say, 'Why you have your Bible and Pilgrim's Progress, that's plenty for you to read.' We had the News and Herald, Godey's Lady Book, and the Home and Farm paper, from Louisville, Kentucky. The Farm and Home paper had a section for men and one for women. The women's section had cooking receipts, styles, and stories in it. When the magazines would come, we got so excited Ma had to divide them out to keep us from getting into arguments and fighting over them. We got Bloom's Almanac, too. Jim read everything in that. Knew the signs and all about the weather. Our neighbors lent him books. Ma taught all of us, when it was so we couldn't go to school."

She walked across the bright rag rug to the window and gazed vacantly at the jonquils, daffodils, narcissi, and violets in the neat front yard, then resumed: "The roads were so muddy and the weather so cold, it was hard to get to school. We had school about four months in the year. The schoolhouse was an old office of Dr. Hill's. There was a long, home-made table down the middle of the room, and high benches at the sides and at each end. My feet would go to sleep. We wore home-made stockings. Ma and Aunt Lula knit the stockings and socks during the summer for all our crowd. I wore heavy leather shoes, with

brass caps on the toes. Shoes 3 were good “hand-me-downs” when they hadn't worn out. I had to wear Sister Lizzie's old shoes and clothes.

“That old office of Dr. Hill's had shelves up and down the walls. We used then for our books and dinner buckets. Cold dinners tasted good then in a tin bucket. We had sausage, spare-rib or backbone, corn bread or biscuit, baked sweet potatoes, and sometimes fried pies. Ma always dried peaches and apples in summer. It was about three miles from our house to the schoolhouse. The sun would rise while we were on the way. It was nearly dark when we got back. But we had a good time playing on the way home. After we got home, we had to bring in the wood, chips, and kindling. And we had to bring water up a steep hill from the spring.

“Our family has always worked since I can remember. Ma said before the war she and her sisters had a maid to wait on them. Her brothers had a manservant, too. I only know what Ma has told us about the war. Pa was severely wounded. Two of his brothers were killed in the 'seven days around Richmond.' Uncle Abram and Uncle Jerry were fighting side by side. Uncle Abram was shot down. Uncle Jerry bent over to lift him up, and he was shot through the back. Pa was sent out foraging for rations to feed the men in the Confederate Army. He went to all the homes he could get to. Mrs. Woodruff, old Major Woodruff's mother, gave and gave, until she was about out of rations. But she gave a whole peck of dried cowpeas after everything got so scarce.

“Pa was a wheelwright, and he went to work in his shop, with Old Uncle Cab Watkins to help him. Uncle Cab was black and greasy looking, but he and Pa worked right together in the shop. And they turned out nice looking wagons, buggies, plowstocks, and every kind of farm tools. They had to 4 use scrap iron and the old worn-out things. Sheep's wool and sometimes cotton or old trimmings of horse hair were used to stuff cushions for the upholstering. I have heard Ma say to Pa, 'Why the cushions in that buggy look good enough for a parlor sofa.'

“Come, I'm going to show you what Bill has just finished for me.” Going through the hall into the neatly arranged sitting room, she showed me a well polished, octagon-shaped table. It was rich walnut color, with four legs rounded and grooved with small circles near the top. She said, “Bill can do anything. He worked his way through school. Went to the University of Iowa and got a degree in science and chemistry. They called him Doctor at school. He got a job with the Aluminum works of America with a big salary. He sent money home to help Maggie and Jane through college. He married up there. This is a picture of the girl. She's pretty, but she didn't live long. We were glad there wasn't any little motherless children left. The depression came, and Bill was laid off. He couldn't get work anywhere.

“He was so lonely up there, he came home and pitched in to help here on the farm, fixing fences and repairing everything. He even made a rock storeroom and smokehouse in the back yard. We had needed that a long time. I keep canned fruits and vegetables and such as that in it. After ever so long, he got some work with the C. W. A., as timekeeper. Later they had him to pay off the workers. That was particular work. He is now in charge of the Fire Department in town. He married again. Has a real pretty wife and a baby girl. His mother-in-law lives with them and takes care of the baby, and his wife works at the post office. They are buying a house in town. It ought not to take them long to pay for it.

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“You can soon pay for a house in Winnsboro with what you would put out in rent every month. Dan and I bought this land after we were married and raising our eight. Dan had good crops of cotton then. We didn't have to pay out much money. I wore cotton dresses, and the children could get on with little expense, as I passed their clothes down as long as they lasted.”

Glancing out of the window, Caroline's eyes sparkled with pride as she continued, “We all say we would rather live here in our own house than in a brick house in town that we didn't own. There are those houses in the Winnsboro Mill village. Most of the families

there have nice furniture and bathrooms and lights. The walls are painted and all that. The outside overseer plants grass, shrubbery, and trees in the yards. But that belongs to the mill company. We know this is our very own, such as it is. Now that Dan and I are getting old, it is a mighty good feeling to know this is ours. We can always have plenty to eat, too, with our own garden, chickens, cows, pigs, and everything. It has been a hard struggle at times to make the little we could earn here go for the many things that were needed. But Dan and I say we were happy in those days, while we were skimping to save. Not that we have much now; but I have nice enough clothes, more than I used to have. The children are always giving us something. Maggie and Bessie bought the Ford. We could get on without that. But they say they like to drive it when they are at home. And, too, they want us to have one here. If it came to the question of us owning a car or our home, we would all take the home every time. I just couldn't rest at night without a shelter over my head that belonged to us.

“My pa had plenty of land, but he couldn't tend much after the war.

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He made a better living as a wheelwright than most people were making farming. Just think, now we have electric lights and a bathroom like people in the cities. It doesn't cost much either, here on the highway near the electric line. We pay a dollar a month for what we use. I want you to see for yourself how nice the bathroom is with those pretty fixtures.”

Caroline flitted out, leaving me at the bathroom door, and was back in a few minutes with a tray filled with glasses of fruit juice, milk, a plate of crisp cookies, and some caramel cake. “Since I have to live by Dr. Buckner's directions,” she said, “I eat something this time of day. When I was a little girl, I recollect how Ma would send me down to Pa's shop to take corn bread and buttermilk to him and Uncle Cab. Pa said he could work better when he had extra victuals that way.

“I never finished telling you about how Dan and me got all of our children through school. Kate, my oldest, didn't go to school until she was eleven years old. I taught her all I could about reading, writing, spelling, and arithmetic. Then she went to the little country school three miles from us. She studied hard and learned all she could there in about six years, along with reading and studying at home, too. Back then, when you were old enough and could stand the State Teacher's Examination and get a certificate, you could get a school and teach. Kate took the examination and got a country school. That paid her $40.00 a month, and the school ran about four months in the year. Then she decided she'd take a business course at Draughon's. When she got through there, she got a job in the Associated Charities in Columbia. She worked there about two years. One day she said to me, 'Ma, I don't get much satisfaction out of making 7 out the reports, writing letters, and keeping office for the Associated Charities, I just believe I'll go in training and learn to be a nurse.' She'd been a good girl helping with expenses here at home. So I thought, 'Now if Kate isn't happy working in that office, and she wants to study to be a nurse, I'll do all I can to get her through.' It didn't cost us anything. She went up to Baltimore to St. Joseph's and got through there. Then she studied some more at Johns Hopkins. They got her to come back over to St. Joseph's and be superintendent of the operating room.

“When she'd done that for three years, she volunteered to be a foreign missionary to China. They sent her on as a medical missionary to a place called Nanking, to learn the Chinese language before she was sent out to work. After that, she was sent to Sutsien Hospital to work in a mission hospital. She carried on a Chinese nurses' training school. And many's the Chinese girl she's trained to 'minister to the needs of their poor people. She was then sent on to a hospital in Hchin-King in Ku Province. She is still there.

“Kate writes me that she never is worried nor afraid of the dangers. She feels like she will be taken care of. There's plenty of fighting around her. Why, she said even the grown men go to pieces in some of the fighting. Where she is, the Chinese love her so, when the fighting started there and they told her she just must get out, some Chinese men carried

her in a chair covered with a raincoat. She couldn't take everything she had, just carried her account books. She had to leave her clothes. The men ran through the mob of fighting people. Her friends that saw it told her they expected to see her killed any minute. After they got through, a big cheer went up, they were so happy that they could save her. She's 8 gone on back to the same place, where she is carrying on her work with the nurses.

“Our children helped each other through school. Then, when my girls went to Winthrop, they didn't spend so much money. They wore uniforms, and tuition was given them. The other three, Maggie, Jane, and Lilly, all went to Winthrop four years. Lilly took the domestic science. She had a county as home demonstration agent. When she had worked there about two years, she got married. Her husband is a farmer. He's a lot older than she is. She teaches in the school at Hartsville, where she lives.

“Jane has taught all of twelve years; ten of them at the same place, Graham, North Carolina. She went up to New York and studied in the summers. She said she lacks just one more summer to get her M. A. degree.

“Maggie is next to Jane. She taught some, but she didn't like teaching. So she got some office work in Washington. She took a Civil Service examination and got the job. While she was in Washington, she studied at night in a school called Strayer's. When so many were without work, they cut her off. She came home and went to Columbia and finished her course in business at Draughon's. Now she has a good job in Spartanburg with the Department of Agriculture.

“Did I tell you about Joe, my boy that works with the railroad? He's been in that railroad office about ever since he's been through school. I reckon fifteen years.

“Jim and Bob just stay here on the farm and help with the work. They didn't care much about school, and, after they finished in Winnsboro at Mt. Zion Institute, under Mr. Peyton,

they didn't want to go any further. That's a lot more education than Dan and me got when we were growing up.

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“We had saved up some money and had it in the Bank of Winnsboro when it closed up in 1931. We do get some of that back all along. Sixty-five percent they have paid back now, and that's a lot better than nothing.

“We don't spend much now for doctors and medicine. When the children were growing up, their tonsils had to be removed. Some of them had adenoids, too. But they took them out in clinics, and it didn't cost so much. Maggie has had the same arm broke twice, but it knit and got well. Last summer, Dr. Buckner sent her to the hospital in Columbia to have a minor operation. She's been much better since that. She doesn't suffer from that old pain in her side and back like she used to. Some of mine had whooping cough, but Lilly never did have it. I was afraid when Joe had the scarlet fever. But we did just what Dr. Buckner told us to, and none of the rest took it. Tom had the diptheria once, too. The doctor gave a serum, and he wasn't sick long. Of course, I have to be particular now, and Dan does, too. But then we are sort of worn-out. We have to rest more and be careful how we eat. But I reckon for old people sixty and seventy-seven years old we are right lucky. We're thankful, too, that our children are well about all the time, except for colds and the like once in awhile.

“Mine don't care about running around at night. They take after me and Dan, liking to read a lot. Then we play checkers here together. The girls and two of my boys play card games now, but they learned that since they have been grown. And I see no harm that it's doing them, when they don't slight their work to play.

“Dan never liked to go around and get into arguments about politics, 10 and our boys are the same. We all vote. My girls vote just as the boys do. Each one knows why they want to vote for the one they do. We all voted against the liquor, and I know we'd be a lot better

off if we didn't have it. None of our children drink. But we sell our produce to the families in the mill, and sometimes some of the women tell Dan that they haven't the money to pay, as their men drink it all up. We have been selling there long enough to know the people, and some of the best women have drinking husbands. But they generally pay sooner or later. When Dan sees that they are in need, he gives to them sometimes. We try to vote for good citizens in our town and county. Now, if all of the officers were as good as our probate judge and the clerk of court, we'd have the laws enforced. Dan and me have tried to teach our children, as they were growing up, to appreciate good and honest men and women who stood for right.

“We've been glad enough for the Government work these last years. As I told you, we lost in the Bank of Winnsboro when it closed up, and Bill, Lilly, and Maggie all was home without work. I've told you about Bill, having a job when they had the C. W. A. and then some of the other work, too, 'til he got on in the town as a paid fireman. Lilly went around helping the women that were on the relief rolls to can. And Maggie's job now with the Department of Agriculture is one of the new jobs in the soil conservation work. Maggie said to me the last time she was home: 'Ma, we could get along and have enough to eat and a place to live, but I am better satisfied to be working and making something. And she enjoys her work. They are all saving with money, too.”

It was getting dark in the room where Caroline and I were sitting, when I realized I must go home in order for Caroline to have her supper 11 at her regular hour, six o'clock. She went with me to the gate, and, while gathering a bunch of flowers for me, she said, “Be sure to come back on Tuesday afternoon at 2:30, when the Presbyterian Auxiliary is meeting with me. They always want to know all about Kate and her work in China.”